



2010 OVERALL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM DESIGN

While there are considerable strengths in the design of this institution's teacher preparation program, such as the curriculum used for teaching elementary and special education teacher candidates how to teach reading, its design could be improved across a range of elements, noted below. Because some of the data that we collect is drawn from public sources, we always ask the institution to verify the accuracy and currency of what we have collected. Texas A&M University declined to review and comment.

Admission Standards

1. Admits teacher candidates with strong academic records ●

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

The standards for admission either into the institution or its teacher preparation program should select teacher candidates from only the top half of the college population.

Texas A&M University's high rating for this standard is based on its classification by U.S. News and World Report as a "more selective" institution in its admissions, ensuring that teacher candidates have sufficiently strong academic credentials.

Elementary Teacher Program



2. Prepares teacher candidates to teach reading

a. Extent to which the science of reading is covered ●

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

The research-based content proven to be necessary for teaching all children to read should be clearly evident in course materials such as lecture topics, assignments and textbooks.

The institution fully meets the standard. While coursework provides preparation in all components of the science of reading, we identified two required textbooks that did not support reading science. The institution received the same rating for its reading preparation in our 2006 national study: What Education Schools Aren't Teaching About Reading and What Elementary Teachers Aren't Learning.

b. Adherence to science of reading throughout coursework ●

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

All of an institution's required reading courses — not just some courses — should impart the research-based content that is necessary for teaching all children to read.

The institution nearly meet the standard. Three out of four required reading courses cover the science of reading.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated



3. Prepares teacher candidates to teach mathematics

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Teacher candidates, even those who excel in math, generally require three semesters of coursework in order to progress from a procedural to a conceptual understanding of the essential mathematics topics taught in the elementary grades. *Based on coursework required until fall 2009, the institution does not fully meet this standard because it simply does not require a sufficient number of courses to allow for adequate coverage of the essential topics. Coursework requirements were scheduled for change in fall 2009 and appear to remedy this deficiency.*

4. Educates teacher candidates in the broad content areas relevant to elementary teaching

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Because they cannot teach what they do not know, teacher candidates need to have a solid grasp of literature and composition; American history, world history, art history and music history; geography; and science. *The institution only partially meets this standard because neither the institution nor its teacher preparation program appears to ensure sufficient coverage in the world/American literature, world history, art history and music history content elementary teachers need. We note course requirements in other essential content areas, including composition, children's literature, American history, world geography and science.*

5. Requires an area of concentration so that teacher candidates develop content expertise and have a second career option

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Teacher candidates should develop some expertise outside of their professional studies, not only to enrich their own academic experience, but also to serve as a fallback major in the event that the student teaching experience goes poorly. *The institution only partially meets this standard because we could find no evidence of any sort of subject matter concentration, save three history courses. Should a teacher candidate fail student teaching, she would face well more than an additional semester's work to be able to graduate under a non-education major.*

6. Offers all required courses at least once a year

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner. *The institution fully meets this standard because it offers all required courses each year.*

7. Prepares teacher candidates for the profession

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, child development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice. *Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, we were able to complete an accurate count of the credit hours in professional coursework that the institution requires, and it appears to be somewhat above typical counts. The institution requires 54 hours of professional coursework (not including student teaching), exceeding the generous upper bound of 50 credits that should be sufficient. Furthermore, in spite of this count, we believe we are able to identify key professional topics that are inadequately addressed in this sequence, most notably 1) assessment and 2) child development.*



8. Student teaching effectively prepares teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom 2011

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary.

The institution meets this minimal standard as it offers a full semester of full-time student teaching.

Secondary Teacher Program

9. Prepares high school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.

While requirements in some of the areas for which the institution prepares secondary teachers appear to be sound, the institution only partially meets the standard because of inadequate program designs in both general science and mathematics. Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poorly designed science programs across the state, including here, the institution should not sanction a system that qualifies secondary teachers to teach multiple subject areas in science after not having taken sufficient coursework in any. The institution does not meet this standard in mathematics because secondary teacher candidates need to complete fewer semester hours in the discipline than the 30 credit hours that is the norm for a college major.

10. Prepares middle school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.

The institution only partially meets the standard because of a flawed program design for "dual subject certification." The institution should not qualify a middle school teacher to teach science and math without sufficient coursework in both subjects.

11. Offers all required courses (high school certification) at least once a year ?

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner.

We were unable to rate the institution on this standard because most courses do not appear in the course schedule.

12. Prepares high school teacher candidates for the profession ?

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, adolescent development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice.

Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, our limited examination of course requirements and descriptions suggests that the institution potentially appears to give inadequate attention to a number of essential professional topics for the secondary teacher, most notably 1) reading across the content areas, 2) adolescent development, and 3) education policy challenges.

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 ? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated

13. Student teaching effectively prepares high school teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom

2011

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary.

The institution does not meet this minimal standard as it does not require a full semester of full-time student teaching for teacher candidates in one-half day paid or non-paid internships.

Special Education Teacher Program**14. Prepares teacher candidates to teach early reading**

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+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

All special education teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching toddlers or teenagers, need coursework in the research-based strategies shown to dramatically reduce the number of children needing remediation in reading.

The institution fully meets the standard. Coursework provides preparation in all components of the science of reading.

15. Prepares teacher candidates to teach elementary mathematics

○

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

Special education teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching toddlers or teenagers, generally need three semesters of coursework in order to progress from a procedural to a conceptual understanding of fundamental mathematics topics.

The institution does not meet this standard because it does not require its special education teacher candidates to take any coursework that is designed to develop their conceptual understanding of elementary mathematics topics.

16. Offers all required courses at least once a year

●

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner.

The institution meets this standard because all required courses are offered each year.

Outcomes**17. Systematically seeks and uses feedback on graduates from school districts**

○

18. Utilizes available data systems to monitor performance of graduates

○

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

Mirroring a similar commitment now found in K-12 education, higher education institutions must embrace data driven decision making and accountability in preparing teachers.

The institution does not meet these standards. In our survey of local school districts that hire the institution's graduates, the Merkel Independent School District responded that the institution does not regularly request any data regarding the job performance of graduates or the performance of graduates' students.

Institutional Features**19. Assigns faculty to teach in their area of expertise**

●

+ Rationale + Methodology + State findings

Only the most extreme examples of unsuitable assignments are noted, such as an instructor teaching both reading and mathematics methods.

The institution meets this standard as we could find no evidence of faculty being inappropriately assigned.



20. Offers grade-span specific coursework as appropriate ●

+ [Rationale](#) + [Methodology](#) + [State findings](#)

A single class with curriculum addressing students from preschoolers to high school seniors cannot adequately prepare both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in areas such as classroom management or instructing students with disabilities. *The institution meets this standard, assuming that multiple sections of a common course allow for separate classes for elementary and secondary candidates on topics benefiting from age-specific approaches.*

21. Ensures that teacher candidates are prepared to teach in a global society NR

+ [Rationale](#) + [Methodology](#) + [State findings](#)

The world has shrunk. Recognition of that fact should pervade the campus. *Because this standard is still in a developmental phase, we do not provide an institutional rating and our findings should only be viewed as exploratory. We note that teacher candidates are required to take coursework in world geography and a foreign language if they did not take two years of foreign language in high school. We also note that education-focused study abroad programs are offered in summer. However, foreign students do not comprise a significant proportion of the institution's student body.*

Exit Standards

Either state licensure standards are adequate or the institution sets a higher standard for program completion than licensure requires

If the state fails to establish rigorous licensure requirements, institutions are still obligated to ensure that their graduates meet high standards. For example, if the state does not require a licensure test that measures candidates' knowledge of every subject taught, institutions must fill this vacuum.

22. Elementary (EC-4/EC-6) ○

+ [Rationale](#) + [Methodology](#) + [State findings](#)

The institution does not meet this standard because it relies only on the state's licensing test, the TExES elementary generalist test, to determine if its elementary teacher candidates possess adequate knowledge of reading instruction, as well as content knowledge in four subject areas. This test is wholly inadequate—both because of its low level of rigor and the lack of separate cut-scores for each subject. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could require a more meaningful test of reading instruction and insist that its teacher candidates pass assessments in each of four subject areas.

23. Middle School (Grades 4-8) ●

+ [Rationale](#) + [Methodology](#) + [State findings](#)

Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the primary reason so many Texas institutions do not meet this standard, this institution does not fully meet this standard because it qualifies middle school teacher candidates for certification in multiple subject areas (e.g., mathematics and science certification) with only a single licensing test upon completion. Because high scores on one portion of the test can make up for low scores on another, this test is inadequate. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could insist that its teacher candidates independently pass assessments in each subject area.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
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